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SUBJECT: UGANDAN PARLIAMENT: "PATRIOTISM CLUBS" SPARK OPPOSITION
BUDGET BOYCOTT

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Uganda's Parliament passed the 2009/10 budget on September 9 after opposition MPs walked out over a provision allocating \$5.25 million for the promotion of "Patriotism Clubs" in schools. Noting that these funds were earmarked for the Ministry of Security rather than the Ministry of Education, opposition members claim the patriotism clubs will be used for partisan political purposes ahead of the 2011 presidential election. End Summary.

Parliament Funds "Patriotism Clubs"

¶2. (SBU) President Museveni raised the idea of government funded "patriotism clubs" in 2008 as a way to instill a sense of nationalism among students and youth. Parliament initially balked at the idea of spending \$2 million to create the clubs, plus another \$3.25 million to recruit 80 Assistant District Resident Commissioners (RDCs) to teach patriotism in 5,000 secondary schools. In May 2009 Museveni prevailed on the ruling party's parliamentary caucus to insert the provisions into the 2009-2010 budget.

¶3. (SBU) Opposition and some ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) parliamentarians believe the clubs are a ruse to introduce propaganda into schools to advance the NRM's political agenda for the 2011 presidential elections. Although the government has said the funds will be placed under the Office of the President, an NRM MP said the funds are actually earmarked for the Ministry of Security run by NRM Secretary General Amama Mbabazi.

¶4. (U) Opposition MPs walked out of Parliament on September 10 after the NRM-majority legislature refused to re-allocate the funds to the Ministry of Education. MP Kassiano Wadri told local media that he and other opposition members walked out "to show our displeasure with the manner in which the government is scaling out its activities without due regard of the minority in the House." Wadri added that the \$3.25 million for the recruitment of 80 special Assistant RDCs to manage the patriotism clubs was "a calculation of the government to campaign for President Museveni come 2011." Other MPs complained that Uganda should not waste millions on patriotism when Ugandan citizens are going without medications.

Comment: Under the Electoral Radar

¶5. (SBU) Uganda's "patriotism clubs" do indeed arouse suspicion. As one NRM MP noted, there has been no attempt to articulate a syllabus or set of standards for these clubs, and the move to earmark the funding to a Ministry other than the Ministry of Education suggests that such planning is likely not forthcoming. The clubs' activities seem designed to target the 18-21 year old age bracket, which includes a bulge of new voters with the potential to swing the 2011 polls in one direction or another. It is entirely possible the clubs will be nothing more than patronage-dispensing booster clubs for NRM candidates in 2011.

